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In re Application of
Volkov
Application No. 10/637,132
Filed/Deposited: 8 August, 2003
Attorney Docket No. SUNMP340

: OFFICE OF PETITIONS

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: DECISION
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This is a decision on the petition filed on 29 March, 2010, considered as a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 (no fee) requesting withdrawal of the holding of abandonment in the above-identified application; alternatively, to revive an application pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) as having been abandoned due to unintentional delay.

The petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **DISMISSED**; the petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **GRANTED**.

As to the Request to Withdraw
the Holding of Abandonment

Petitioners always are directed to the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) for guidance as to the proper showing and timeliness requirements for relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

Petitioner appears not to comply with the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I)—as discussed below, Petitioner has failed to satisfy the timeliness requirements set forth there.

As to the Allegations
of Unintentional Delay

The requirements of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) are the petition and fee therefor, a reply, a proper statement and/or showing of unintentional delay under the regulation, and, where applicable, a terminal disclaimer and fee.

Petitioners' attentions always are directed to the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(II) with regard to petitions pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b).

BACKGROUND

The record reflects as follows:

Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the non-final Office action mailed on 16 October, 2006, with required reply due absent extension of time on or before 16 January, 2007.

The Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 16 July, 2007.

On 17 November, 2009, Petitioner filed, *inter alia*, a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 and averred, *inter alia*, that a timely reply had been filed—and averred further that a copy of the receipt card was enclosed with the petition and a copy of the timely reply, but none was evident in the record and there was no statement by the person who signed the certificate of mailing (dated 16 February, 2007) on the copy of the transmittal sheet averred to have accompanied the reply. Moreover, Petitioner's reply to the Notice of Abandonment was filed some forty (40) months after the Notice was mailed and clearly not within the two (2) months required under the regulation, and there is no indication of a Status Inquiry having been filed in that period. The petition was dismissed on 8 March, 2010.

On 29 March, 2010, Petitioner re-advanced the petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 and also submitted a petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) with fee, reply and statement of unintentional delay.

Petitioner failed to comply with the guidance as set forth below in the citation from the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP). As noted on an earlier petition, Petitioner's reply to the Notice of Abandonment was late under the rule (37 C.F.R. §1.181), and Petitioner is reminded of the guidance set forth in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) (in pertinent part):

C.Treatment of Untimely Petition To Withdraw Holding of Abandonment

37 C.F.R. 1.181(f) provides that, *inter alia*, except as otherwise provided, any petition not filed within 2 months from the action complained of may be dismissed as untimely. Therefore, any petition (under 37 C.F.R. §1.181) to withdraw the holding of abandonment not filed within 2 months of the mail date of a notice of abandonment (the action complained of) may be dismissed as untimely. 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f).

Rather than dismiss an untimely petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f), the Office may require a terminal disclaimer as a condition of granting an untimely petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment.

3. Utility and Plant Applications Filed on or After May 29, 2000

In utility and plant applications filed on or after May 29, 2000, a terminal disclaimer should **not** be required as a condition of granting an untimely petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. This is because any patent term adjustment is automatically reduced under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.704(c)(4) in applications subject to the patent term adjustment provisions of the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) if a petition to withdraw a holding of abandonment is not filed within two months from the mailing date of the notice of abandonment, and if applicant does not receive the notice of abandonment, any patent term adjustment is reduced under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.704(a) by a period equal to the period of time during which the applicant “failed to engage in reasonable efforts to conclude prosecution” (processing or examination) of the application.

Where the record indicates that the applicant intentionally delayed the filing of a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment, the Office may simply dismiss the petition as untimely (37 C.F.R. §1.181(f)) solely on the basis of such intentional delay in taking action in the application without further addressing the merits of the petition. Obviously, intentional delay in seeking the revival of an abandoned application precludes relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) or (b) (****).

With regard to Petitioner’s request to withdraw the holding of abandonment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181, the guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) provides in pertinent part:

37 C.F.R. §1.10(c) through §1.10(e) and §1.10(g) set forth procedures for petitioning the Director of the USPTO to accord a filing date to correspondence as of the date of deposit of the correspondence as “Express Mail.” A petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment relying upon a timely reply placed in “Express Mail” must include an appropriate petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.10(c), (d), (e), or (g) (see MPEP §513). When a paper is shown to have been mailed to the Office using the “Express Mail” procedures, the paper must be entered in PALM with the “Express Mail” date.

Similarly, applicants may establish that a reply was filed with a postcard receipt that properly identifies the reply and provides *prima facie* evidence that the reply was timely filed. See MPEP §503. For example, if the application has been held abandoned for failure to file a reply to a first Office action, and applicant has a postcard receipt showing that an amendment was timely filed in response to the Office action, then the holding of abandonment should be withdrawn upon the filing of a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. When the reply is shown to have been timely filed based on a postcard receipt, the reply must be entered into PALM using the date of receipt of the reply as shown on the post card receipt.

Where a certificate of mailing under 37 C.F.R. §1.8, but not a postcard receipt, is relied upon in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment, see 37 C.F.R. 1.8(b) and

MPEP §512. As stated in 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b)(3) the statement that attests to the previous timely mailing or transmission of the correspondence must be on a personal knowledge basis, or to the satisfaction of the Director of the USPTO. If the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing is not made by the person who signed the Certificate of Mailing (i.e., there is no personal knowledge basis), then the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing should include evidence that supports the conclusion that the correspondence was actually mailed (e.g., copies of a mailing log establishing that correspondence was mailed for that application). When the correspondence is shown to have been timely filed based on a certificate of mailing, the correspondence is entered into PALM with the actual date of receipt (i.e., the date that the duplicate copy of the papers was filed with the statement under 37 C.F.R. §1.8).

37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) also permits applicant to notify the Office of a previous mailing or transmission of correspondence and submit a statement under 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b)(3) accompanied by a duplicate copy of the correspondence when a reasonable amount of time (e.g., more than one month) has elapsed from the time of mailing or transmitting of the correspondence. Applicant does not have to wait until the application becomes abandoned before notifying the Office of the previous mailing or transmission of the correspondence. Applicant should check the private Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system for the status of the correspondence before notifying the Office. See MPEP §512.¹

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 does not toll any periods that may be running any action by the Office and a petition seeking relief under the regulation must be filed within two (2) months of the act complained of (*see*: 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f)), and those registered to practice and all others who make representations before the Office are reminded to inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.²

The availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner on-demand information as to events/transactions in an application.

¹ *See*: MPEP §711.03(c) (I)(B).

² *See* supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on Petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. *See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).³ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a Petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority.

Unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁴)

Allegations as to the Request to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

The guidance in the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c)(I) specifies the showing required and how it is to be made and supported.

Petitioner appears not to have made the timely showing required.

As to Allegations of Unintentional Delay

The requirements of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) are the petition and fee therefor, a reply, a proper statement of unintentional delay under the regulation, and, where applicable, a terminal disclaimer and fee.

It appears that the requirements under the rule have been satisfied.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is dismissed; the the petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is granted.

³ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

⁴ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

The instant application is released to Technology Center/AU 2191 for further processing in due course.

Petitioner may find it beneficial to view Private PAIR within a fortnight of the instant decision to ensure that the revival has been acknowledged by the OPAP in response to this decision. It is noted that all inquiries with regard to that change in status need be directed to the OPAP where that change of status must be effected—that does not occur in the Office of Petitions.

Telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214—it is noted, however, that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2⁵) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).

/John J. Gillon, Jr./
John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

⁵ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.